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The Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District (NENEDD) is a multi-county regional nonprofit development organization. A 9-member board of elected or appointed officials governs NENEDD. The Village of Santee joined NENEDD in 1998 and Jim Trudell of Santee was appointed to the NENEDD Board of Directors. The mission statement of the District is, "To address regional economic development opportunities and challenges identified through a Community Economic Development Strategy."

NENEDD's OEDP has included working with northeast Nebraska tribes since 1998.

Tribal Assistance: NENEDD will continue to encourage collaboration among tribes in northeast Nebraska. Assistance to tribes will be provided to address their goals identified through a strategic planning process held in 1998.

The NENEDD 1998-1999 EDA Progress Report identifies accomplishments towards this OEDP goal.

Empowerment Zone: NENEDD will assist tribal members in submitting an application to the United States Department of Agriculture to be designated as an Empowerment Zone and will facilitate the development of a strategic plan to be used in collaboration with this program.

NENEDD submitted an Empowerment Zone application on behalf of the Santee Sioux Tribe. The Santee Sioux Tribe has continued to pursue other financial assistance through NENEDD including two CDBG applications. USDA has designated Santee as a Champion Community.

A NENEDD Community Coordinator is assigned to work with specific member communities. The staff person has worked with the Santee Economic Development Department, Village of Santee leaders, Santee Sioux Tribal leaders, and Nebraska Indian Community College staff. Assistance provided to the Santee community

during the past two years has included: community surveys, town-hall meeting facilitation, CDBG grant writing, CDBG grant administration, business prospect interviews and recruitment, assisting with tourism development, strategic planning for Rural EZ, preparation of nomination for Rural EZ, comprehensive land use planning, project development, and sponsorship of Fund for Folk Culture letter of intent.

An Overall Economic Development Plan for the Santee Sioux Tribe and a community survey were completed in 1998 by the Santee Sioux Economic Development staff. The OEDP has provided guidance for community development decisions and the EZ strategic planning process.

Geographic Information

The Village of Santee and Santee Sioux Reservation are located in Knox County in Northeast Nebraska, with the northern boundary being the Missouri River and Lewis and Clark Lake. The area is characterized as primarily native pasture and lower quality farm land. The topography is composed of rolling hills, with relatively little flat area.

Demographic Information

Over the past few years, Santee has seen a tremendous influx of population. In the 1990 Census, the population was recorded to be 758 in the Santee Reservation. Based on 1997 Bureau of Indian Affairs labor force report statistics, there were about 900 enrolled members, over the age of 18, living on the Reservation. The health care service providers, who monitor the population, estimate the current Santee population to be 1,247.

"Despite the depressed economic conditions on the Reservation, steady long-term population growth is anticipated as a result of the desire of Santee people to remain on the Reservation coupled with in-migration and a youthful resident profile" (Bureau of Reclamation, September 1997). On the Santee Reservation, 45.8% of the residents are under the age of 19. This compares to 28% for Knox County and 30% for the state of Nebraska. By the year 2000, the total estimated population for the Reservation is forecast at 1,413, increasing to 2,220 by year 2020. By year 2040, the population is expected to grow to 3,550, an annual growth rate of about 2.5%. In comparison, the Knox County population is expected to decline slightly until the year 2000, then it is projected to increase slightly by about 0.1% annually.

According to the 1990 Census, 90.06% of the residents were listed as low-to-moderate income. The average annual income of the Santee Reservation resident is \$9,305 and the median household income of a Village of Santee resident is \$8,896. The Santee Reservation has 55.9% of its residents at poverty level or below, and 63.9% of the Village of Santee citizens live at the poverty level or below, according to a 1997 Bureau of Census Report. An increase in the percentage of residents

living in poverty has taken place in the last decade. A 1990 Bureau of Census study of the American Indian Reservations and Trust Lands showed that Santee had 41.08% of their residents living at poverty levels. In Knox County, 20% of the population lives at the poverty level or below, while the state of Nebraska has 11% of its residents below the poverty level.

Empowerment Zone Strategic Planning Process

Santee Vision Statement

The Village of Santee and the Santee Sioux Tribe of Nebraska envisions a "self-sufficient community that conserves and develops natural resources; that provides quality education to develop life-long learners; that forms and maintains businesses and other organizations by developing a strong work ethic; that empowers the Santee people to become stronger through cultural and spiritual values; and that envisions the Santee people taking pride in themselves and their community."

A strategic planning process was initiated in March 1998, with project facilitation provided by Lowell Schroeder and Jill Grant from NENEDD, Connie Justice from Nebraska Department of Economic Development, and Terri Olander from USDA Rural Development, Knox County. Local coordinators from Santee Economic Development were Jim Trudell, Planner, and Mike Crosley, Credit and Finance Officer. An extensive strategic plan was undertaken during the summer and fall of 1998. This process included a community survey and strategic planning committee involving representatives from many different segments of the Santee population. The public was encouraged to take an active role in the Strategic planning process through survey responses, a town hall meeting, and weekly strategic planning team meetings. Members of the strategic planning team included Santee Community Participants from organizations such as: The Santee Family Preservation Plan, Santee Health Clinic, Nebraska Indian Community College, Tribal members, members of the Drum Group, and the Health, Education, Addiction, Recovery Training Program. Over twenty local, state, and federal resource organizations met weekly with the Tribe to assist in developing an empowerment strategy.

Throughout the process, community input was encouraged. For three months, weekly meetings were held. A Community Wide Needs Assessment Survey was administered in May, with 65% of the households responding to the survey. The survey was developed, with input from community members, to provide information for the Empowerment Zone application. It was distributed and collected by Santee youth, with tabulation provided by NENEDD staff. The survey results were reported to the strategic planning team participants. Many key issues were identified including social barriers, educational barriers, organizational barriers, health care barriers, and physical barriers. Several committees were developed to address many of the key barriers and issues identified by the survey and the strategic planning team. Throughout this long range planning process,

Santee recognized the interdependence of economic, social, and governmental factors in the development process.

The Education/Training committee is focused on providing educational programs and, specifically, job training type programs.

- The Industry Recruitment Committee will strive to expand the capacity of the box factory as well as efforts to bring new businesses and industry to Santee.
- The Tourism/Culture committee was formed to identify ways of developing a "tourism loop" that would cultivate interest in the cultural, natural, and traditional uniqueness of the Santee region.
- The Technology committee is designated to identify ways to gain additional technological resources to be used by the educational systems as well as business ventures in Santee.
- An Agricultural group is identifying the agricultural land uses available to the Santee as well as non-traditional agricultural processes including raising bison, value added processing, and marketing.
- The Infrastructure and Community Facilities will focus on the improvement of the infrastructure, such as the road systems, fire and police protection, and tribal buildings.

Throughout this process, the community and various representatives identified key strengths of Santee as well. Some of the strengths identified included:

- Cultural strengths such as traditional dances and drumming in the schools to promote pride in the Santee traditions.
- A strong and active school board and home of the Nebraska Indian Community College that is active in areas such as economic development education.
- The Santee Housing Authority that continues to build new homes with the housing program as an important employer.
- A health care clinic and chemical dependency programs.
- A sixteen-acre Industrial Park where the Santee Hay Company is located. The Santee Tribe Paper Products factory opened in 1998 in an effort to provide employment in the Santee area and now employs 14 people.
- A buffalo herd, employing 5 people, maintained in an effort to establish non-traditional agriculture, cultural ties, and tourism.
- Natural and environmental assets that include the panoramic view on the edge of the Lewis and Clark Lake and land on the waterfront. Future opportunities for recreational activities exist. Wildlife provides potential both for tourism and for hunting that could be developed by Santee to further its tourism potential.

An important outcome of this extensive strategic planning process was the submission of the Santee Sioux Tribe of Nebraska Empowerment Zone

Application. Other benefits include increased cooperation regional organizations such as the Northeast Nebraska Economic Development District, REAP, Nebraska Indian Community College, NPPD, USDA Rural Development, Knox County Cooperative Extension, Nebraska Department of Economic Development, Northeast Nebraska RC&D, Great Plains Communications, and other agencies, as well as, better coordination of the community services in Santee.

One project that has stemmed from the efforts aimed at tourism development is the Santee application for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) to build a cultural center in coordination with the Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC). A Tourism Development Initiative Grant was awarded in June of 1999. The Northeast Nebraska RC&D staff has assisted in the development of guided bus tours of the Santee area.

A CDBG planning grant was awarded in July of 1999 and will provide funding assistance to develop a Village and Tribal comprehensive land use plan and zoning regulations. The Village has contracted with NENEDD for planning services. The plan will allow Santee to grapple with community and tribal issues and form goals and objectives to confront the barriers identified in the EZ strategic plan. The comprehensive plan will also allow Santee to understand some of the key issues involved with these barriers as well as different solutions and alternative approaches. The land use plan will assist a Bureau of Reclamation study by identifying potential growth areas for a rural water project and treatment facility. The comprehensive plan will also coordinate economic development goals that have been addressed in the "Santee Overall Economic Development Plan" and Santee EZ application with land-use and zoning issues that face any community that strives toward development and empowerment.

A group of Knox County cattle producers and Tribal representatives have formed a committee to investigate the feasibility of a bison/specialty beef packing facility. The Knox County Extension Service has received grant funding from the Wallace Institute to assist with the study. An interest survey is being sent to county producers and area tribes with bison herds.

The Santee Tribe has entered into a purchase agreement to acquire property in the Devil's Nest. A group of investors has proposed a multi-million dollar family orientated tourism project that has the potential to provide 400 jobs.

The Santee Sioux Economic Development staff has utilized the expertise of NENEDD and Nebraska Public Power staff to screen business prospects and provides recommendations to improve the operations of Santee Tribe Paper Products.

Lessons Learned during the Strategic Planning Process

Comments from strategic planning team leaders:

Jim Trudell, Santee Economic Development

"This process has been enlightening for both the Tribe and for the surrounding communities. For the Tribe to grow their economy, telling their story is critical. The point of telling their story is to change lots of individual minds, nationally and locally, one by one. By working together with state and local groups, the Tribe has learned some very valuable lessons; first, that they are not alone, and secondly, that if you have low expectations, you are not disappointed when your expectations are not met. Finally, if groups work together to accomplish things, their goals can be met and that success brings rewards, not only for the Reservation, but also to each group that participated in each step of the process."

Terri Olander, USDA Rural Development, Knox County

"Working with the Santee Empowerment Zone committee was an enjoyable experience. In the beginning I was apprehensive, not really knowing what my part was in this group, and also the fact that I was working with so many different organizations as well as the Santee tribal committee. After the first meeting, these fears were gone. We all worked well together and I learned a lot about tribal government, cultures, and the needs of the Santee community. Even though we were not able to get the funding we were hoping for, it was a good starting point. Goals were set and I felt that we were at least taking a step in the right direction. We all learned a lot about each other and it felt good to be working as a "team." New friendships have been formed and I came away from this planning committee with a feeling of accomplishment and a new outlook."

Lowell Schroeder, NENEDD Community Coordinator

"Even though the strategic planning process was initiated because of the EZ application process, we were careful to not let the potential \$40 million prize dominate the project. We always said, 'Let's come up with development strategies that can be accomplished with existing local, state, and federal resources.'"

"During the process, I learned to ask the important questions, then really listen to the thoughts and feelings that were expressed. Some of the most effective listening sessions took place in one on one informal settings. Our team of facilitators and resource agency staff could have studied the community and prepared a report on their problems and opportunities much easier, but it would be gathering dust a year later. The real value of the strategic planning process has been the new and revitalized working relationships, both within the Santee community, and between the Santee community and resource agency staff."

It was very important to share meals, tour the reservation area, and learn about Santee people, history, and culture. This has helped to build trust and a strong working relationship for the many future community development projects needed to help the Santee Tribe meet the needs of their people.

Web Site Links

NENEDD www.nenedd.org

Santee Sioux Tribe of Nebraska www.santeedakota.org